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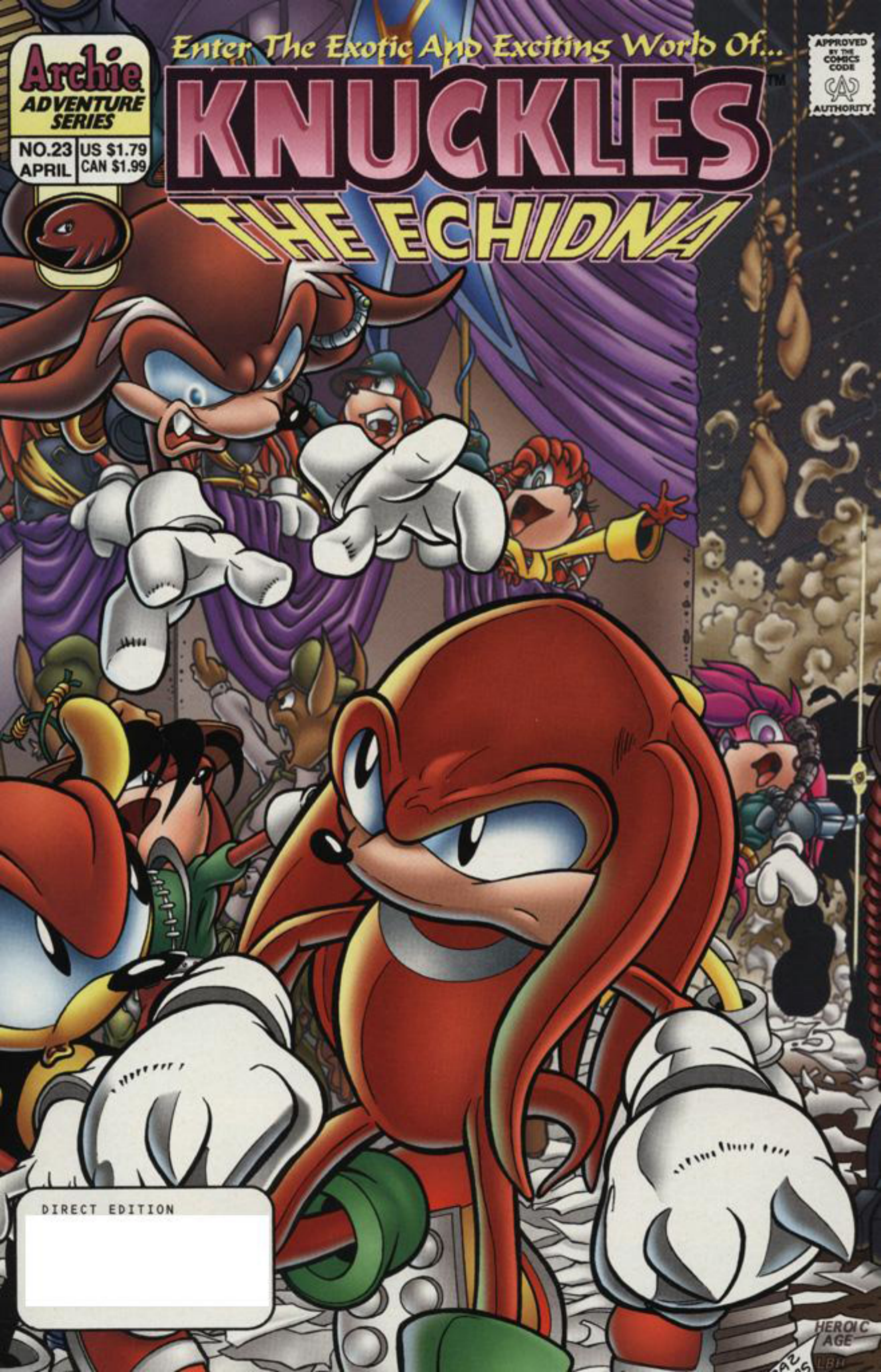
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Enter The Exotic And Exciting World Of...

GNUCKLES

THE ECHIDNA

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY



DIRECT EDITION

HEROIC
AGE

LBH

GNUCKLES™

BOOK TWENTY-THREE

DARK ALLIANCE

PART TWO OF THREE

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BORN TO THE MOST NOBLE OF ECHIDNA HOUSES, THE LATEST TO CONTINUE THE FAMILY HERITAGE AND RESPONSIBILITY AS GUARDIAN OF THE FLOATING ISLAND, DEFENDER OF ALL THE FORCES OF EVIL FROM THE WORLD BEYOND AS WELL AS THOSE WHO WOULD THREATEN FROM WITHIN!

ARCHIE COMICS AND SEGA PRESENT...
GNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA!



"THE DARK LEGION WAS NEVER DEFEATED. WE WERE STABBED IN THE BACK BY THE WEAK AND GREEDY IN POWER. THE TRUE ECHIDNA CIVILIZATION IS DESTINED TO RULE THE WORLD OF MOBIUS. ONLY A STRONG LEADER — SUCH AS MYSELF — CAN SAVE ECHIDNAPOLIS FROM THE RADICALS AND TECHNO-CONSERVATIVES WHO WOULD WISH US BACK INTO THE STONE AGE."

MENNIKER, ADDRESSING HIS TROOPS AFTER EMERGING FROM THEIR IMPRISONMENT IN ANOTHER ZONE.

SPECIAL BULLETIN

THIS IS AN ENN SPECIAL BULLETIN!

MY FELLOW CITIZENS--

--AS YOU ALL KNOW, ELECTION SEASON IS UPON US--

--AND ALTHOUGH A LARGE NUMBER OF YOU HAVE EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR THIS ADMINISTRATION--

--AFTER MUCH CONSIDERATION, I HAVE DECIDED NOT TO RUN FOR THE POSITION OF HIGH COUNCILOR EVER AGAIN!

OUR SOCIETY NOW STANDS AT A CROSSROADS, AND I BELIEVE ONLY NEW LEADERSHIP CAN PROVIDE THE NEW IDEAS NECESSARY TO SEE US THROUGH.

THEREFORE, I WILL ANNOUNCE MY RECOMMENDATION FOR THE CANDIDATE TO SUCCEED ME AT A RALLY IN GUARDIANS' PARK AT NOON TOMORROW!

I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING ALL LIKE-MINDED FELLOW CITIZENS COME OUT AND SHOW THEIR SUPPORT!

THANK YOU AND GOOD NIGHT!



WHAT DO YOU THINK IT MEANS, GENERAL?

FURTHER ECHIDNA TREACHERY, MOST LIKELY, GERBIL!

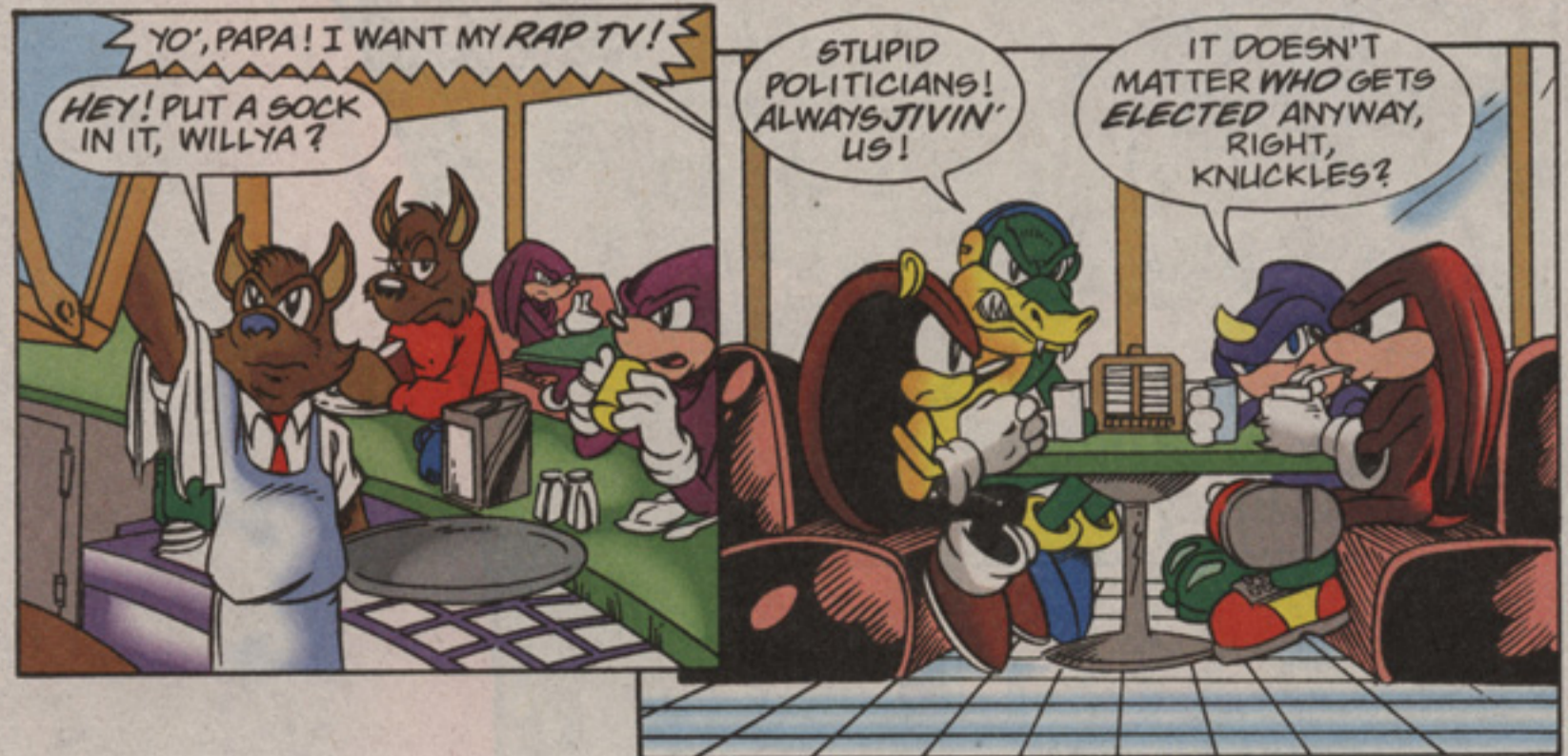
WE'LL KNOW FOR CERTAIN COME TOMORROW!



KLIK!

NOW THIS WAS A DEVELOPMENT I HADN'T ANTICIPATED!

I BETTER SCHEDULE EXTRA TROOPS ON HAND JUST IN CASE!



YO', PAPA! I WANT MY RAP TV!

HEY! PUT A SOCK IN IT, WILLYA?

STUPID POLITICIANS! ALWAYS JIVIN' US!

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO GETS ELECTED ANYWAY, RIGHT, KNUCKLES?

"WHO CARES? NONE OF IT CONCERNS ME, ANYWAY!"

TESTING!
TESTING! ONE...
TWO... THREE... CHECK!
CHECK!

...THREE... CHECK! CHECK!

DINGOES
HAVE
RIGHTS.

ELECTION NIGHT

YOU WERE SAYING?

I'M A GUARDIAN, VECTOR!

I GO WHERE I'M NEEDED!

DINGO POWER!

I DON'T SUPPOSE A LITTLE BIRDIE TOLD YOU TO COME HERE?



GUARDIAN!

THANK YOU FOR COMING!

CONSTABLE REMINGTON, NO PROBLEMO!

YOU SHARE A DIRECT LINE WITH THIS DUDE OR WHAT, KNUX?



NOT YET!

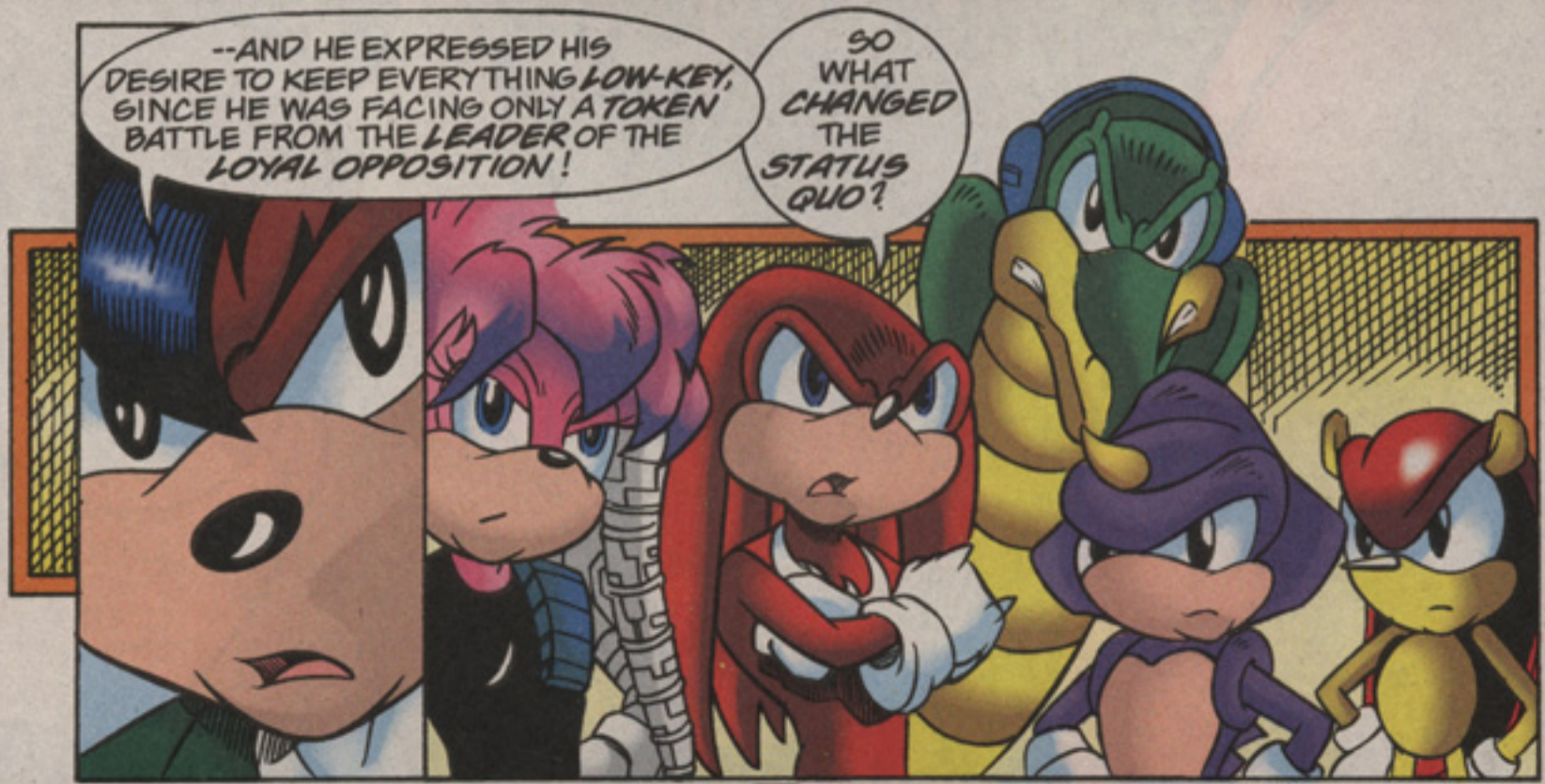
SPEAKING OF WHICH, AFTER THIS RALLY IS OVER, I'D APPRECIATE A BIT OF YOUR TIME TO WORK OUT A BETTER SYSTEM, GUARDIAN!



WHAT COULD BE EASIER THAN LEAVING WORD AT MY MOTHER'S PLACE?

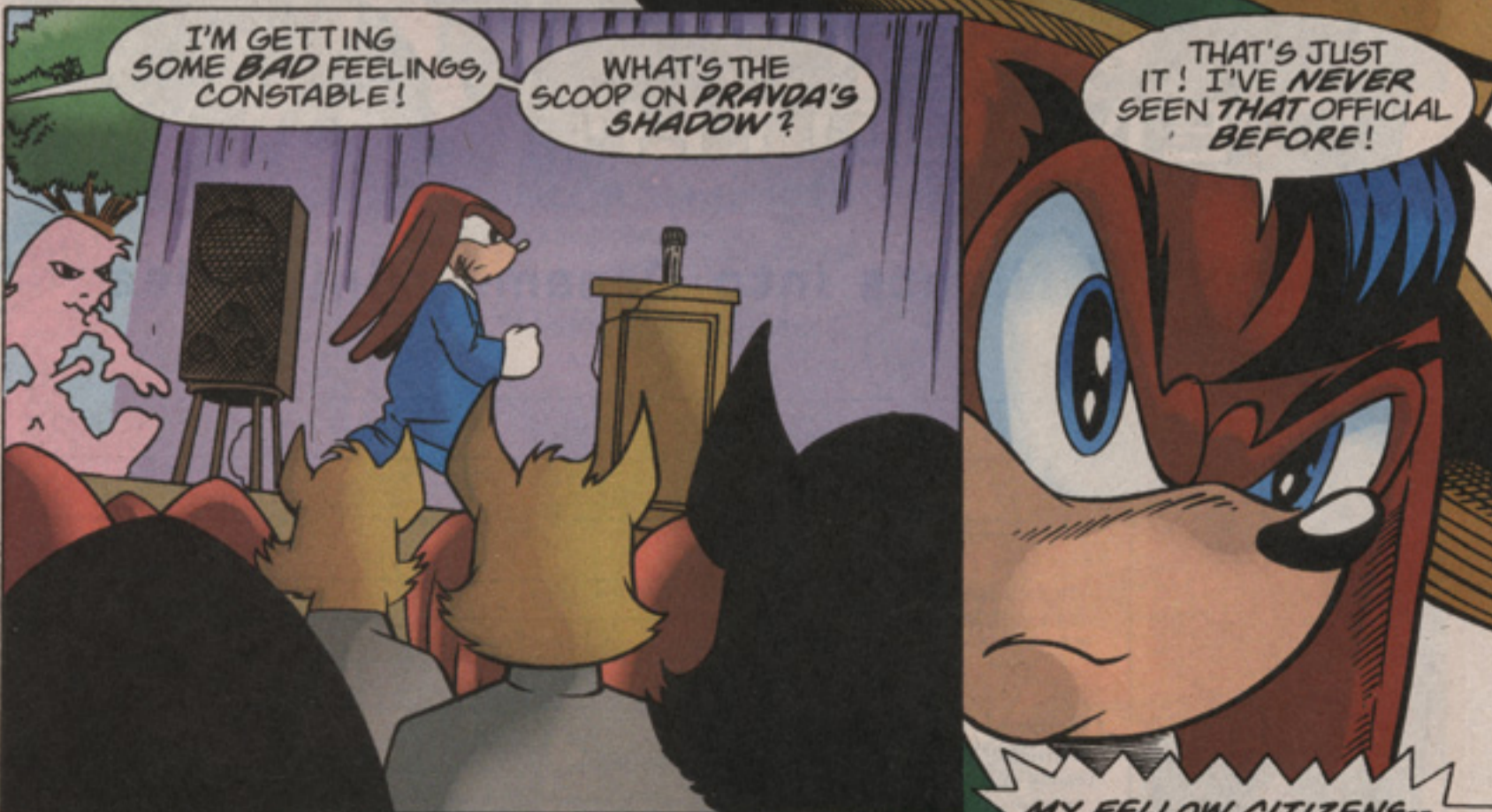
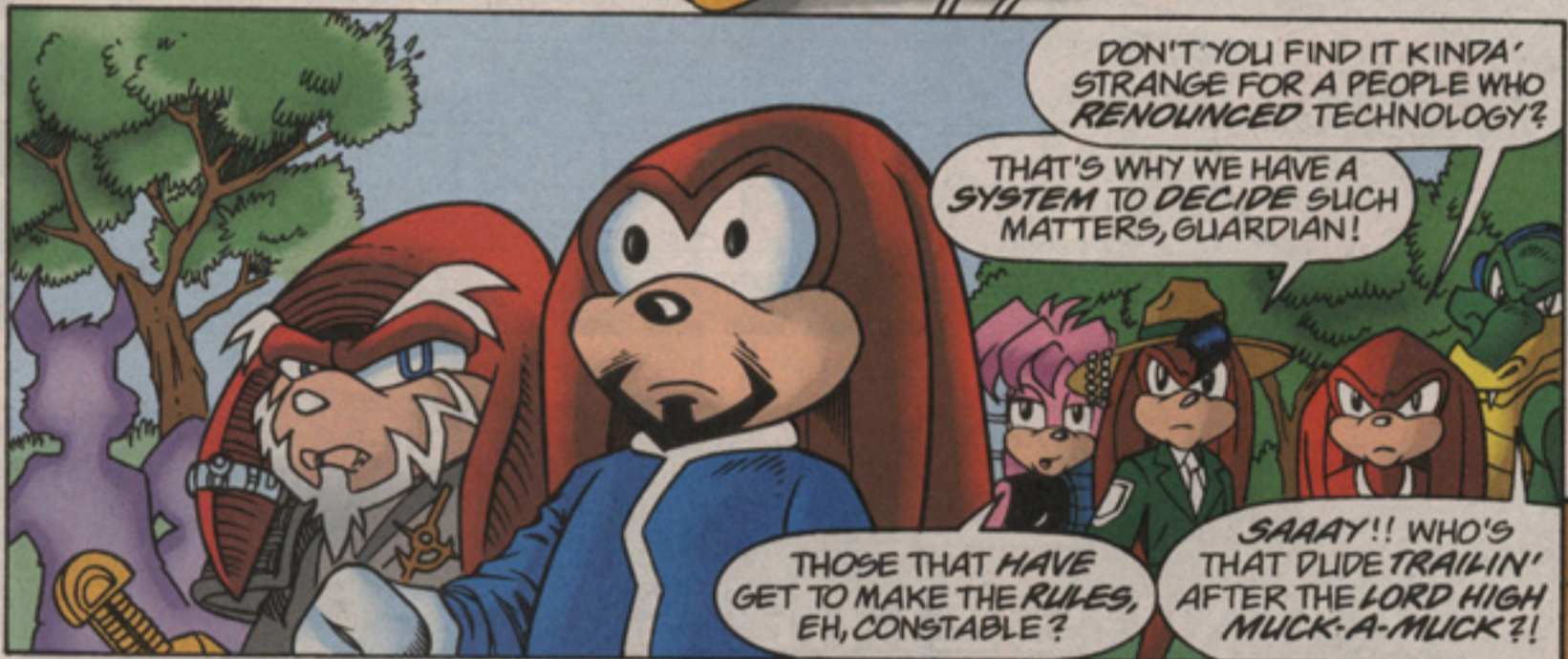
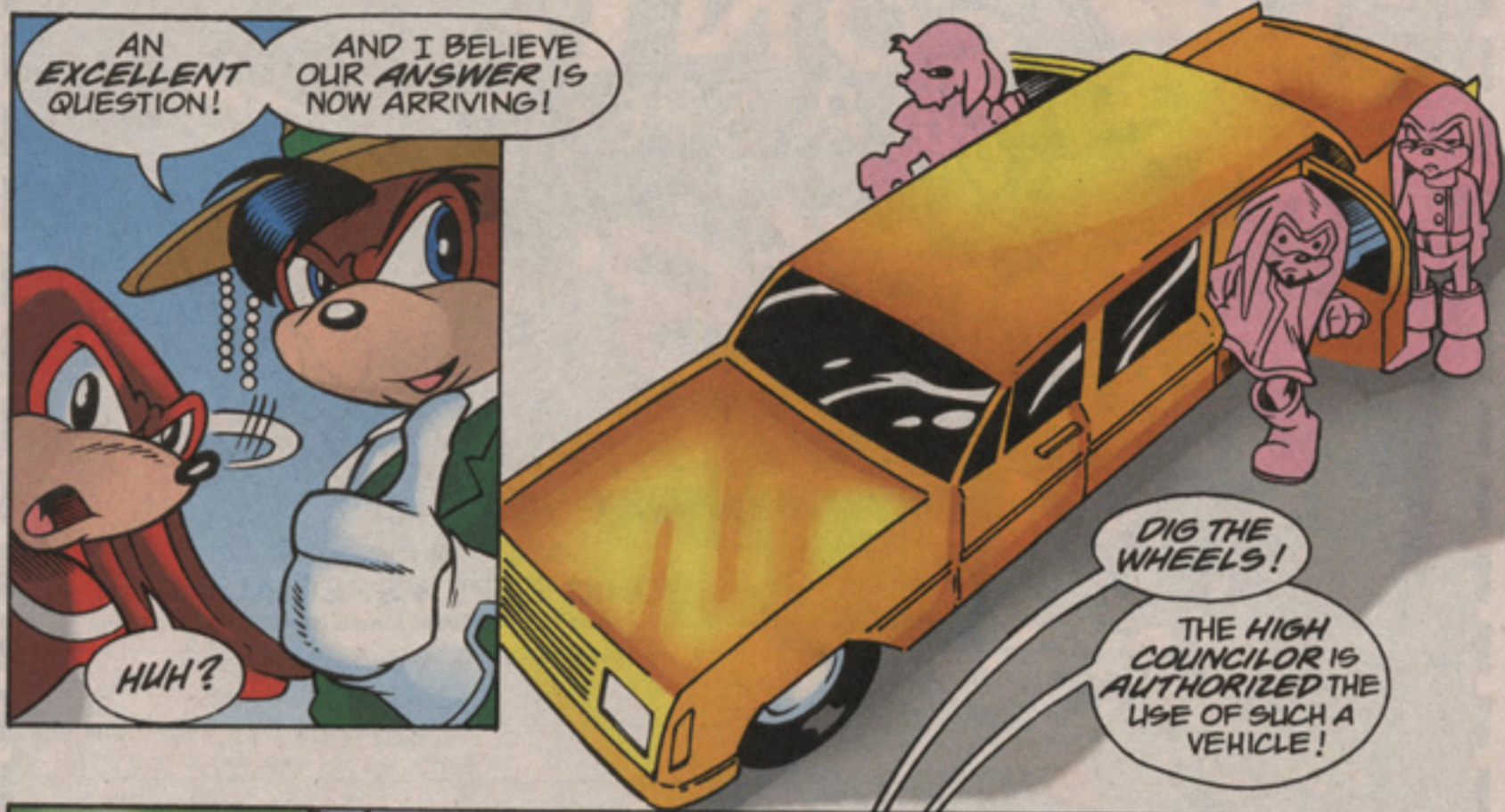
ANYWAY, HOW COME YOU WANTED ME HERE?

I RECENTLY HAD A DISCUSSION WITH HIGH COUNCILOR PRAVDA ABOUT HIS RE-ELECTION PLANS--



--AND HE EXPRESSED HIS DESIRE TO KEEP EVERYTHING LOW-KEY, SINCE HE WAS FACING ONLY A TOKEN BATTLE FROM THE LEADER OF THE LOYAL OPPOSITION!

SO WHAT CHANGED THE STATUS QUO?



--I HAVE ASKED YOU HERE TODAY BECAUSE I BELIEVE WE STAND ON THE THRESHOLD OF A NEW ERA--

--AN ERA WHICH REQUIRES THE LEADERSHIP OF SOMEONE MORE ADAPTIVE TO THE CHANGING TIMES!

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN--

-- I PRESENT TO YOU--

--OUR NEXT HIGH COUNCILOR--
BENEDICT!

CLAP! CLAP!

CLAP!

THANK YOU!
THANK YOU!

MY FRIENDS--

--CENTURIES AGO, OUR FOREFATHERS WERE CONFRONTED WITH THE THREAT OF ANNIHILATION FROM THE HEAVENS ABOVE!

THEY DID NOT PANIC, NOR DID THEY ABANDON HOPE!

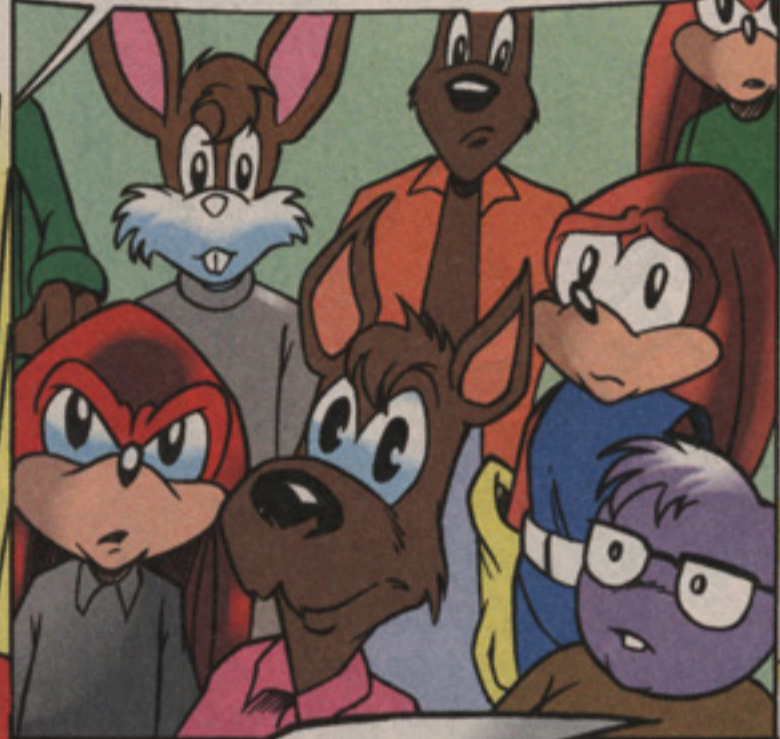


INSTEAD, THEY UTILIZED STATE-OF-THE-ART TECHNOLOGY THEY THEMSELVES CREATED AND DEVELOPED! A PRODUCT OF THEIR EXTRAORDINARY INTELLIGENCE!

BUT WHEN THE MEANS TO RESTORE OUR HOME TO THE MOTHER PLANET WAS SUBMITTED FOR CONSIDERATION--



IN SAVING THEMSELVES, THE FLOATING ISLAND BECAME A REALITY!



-- IT WAS AT THAT MOMENT A SELECT FEW MADE IT THEIR AGENDA TO CONDEMN THE MAJORITY TO THE DARK AGES!

HAVING RENDERED A DECISION--

-- THEY TOOK IT UPON THEMSELVES TO TAKE ACTION--



--EXPRESSLY FORBIDDING A FELLOW ECHIDNA FROM SHOWING US THE PATH TO SALVATION!



AND THEN--

--THEY HAD THE ABSOLUTE TEMERITY TO TURN HIS OWN BROTHER AGAINST HIM!



"WELL, I SAY TO YOU UPON THIS VERY DAY-- AFTER SO MANY GENERATIONS OF MAINTAINING THE STATUS QLO--"

TONIGHT--

-- YOU WILL BE GIVEN A CHOICE--



--BETWEEN BURYING YOUR HEADS IN THE SAND AND LISTENING TO THE LIES OF THE OLD, CORRUPT REGIME--

--YOUR FIRST REAL CHOICE IN AGES--



--OR EMBRACING OUR COMMON HERITAGE AND UTILIZING THE TECHNOLOGY WE OURSELVES CREATED!



I THEREFORE SAY TO YOU--

--ASK NOT WHAT THE HEIRS
OF DIMITRI CAN DO FOR
YOU, ASK WHAT YOU CAN
DO FOR THE HEIRS
OF DIMITRI!

LET THE WORD
GO FORTH--A VOTE
FOR ME--

--IS A
VOTE FOR OUR
FREEDOM!

TECHNOLOGY NOW!!
TECHNOLOGY FOREVER!!!

**HAIL
DIMITRI!**

HAL DUNTRY!

THEY NEVER GIVE UP, DO THEY?

HE DOES HAVE A POINT, SABRE!

WHEN YOU STOP AND THINK ABOUT IT--

-- WE'RE THE ONES WHO ARE THE HYPOCRITES!

ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS LOOK NO FARTHER THAN THIS ROOM!

I HAVE, GRANDFATHER SOJOURNER--

--AND ALL I SEE ARE THE MEANS TO COMBAT THE ENEMY ON A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD!

BESIDES, OUR FOREFATHER, EDMUND, NEVER MEANT TO SUPPRESS TECHNOLOGY FOREVER!

SAYS WHO? WHERE'S YOUR PROOF?

GO EASY, SOJOURNER!

YOU KNOW SABRE IS NOT ONE TO ENGAGE IN IDLE DEBATE!

THOUGH I APPRECIATE THUNDERHAWK'S COMMENTS, THEY'RE COMPLETELY UNNECESSARY!

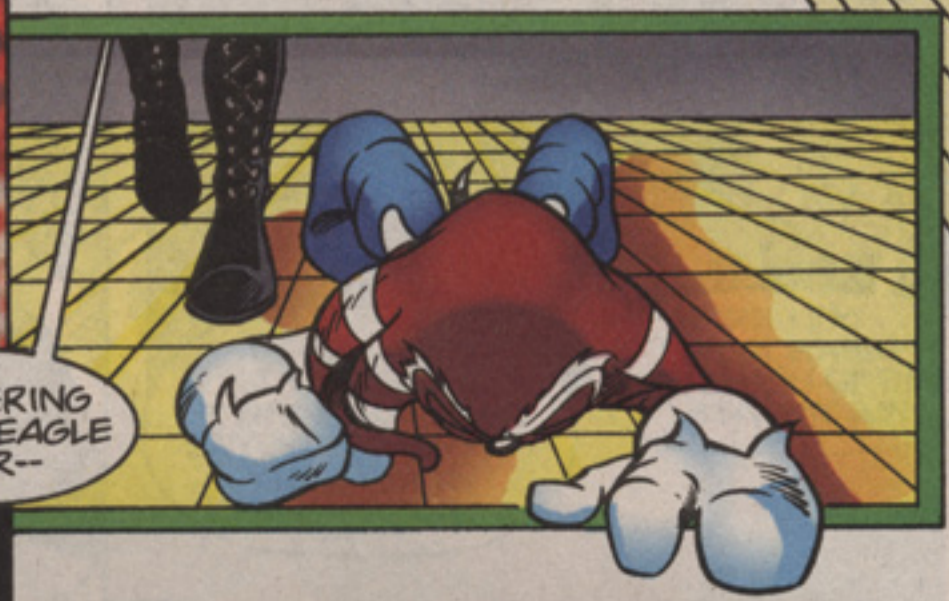
**BREEP!
BREEP!
BREEP!**

ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY SEE THE--!

THE ALARM!!!



BATTERING
RAM TO EAGLE
FOUR--





--WHY DID YOU MOVE TO THE BACK?

SHOULDN'T YOU HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED THE HIGH COUNCILOR OR SOMETHING?



SOMETHING IS GOING ON HERE, ESPY!

REMINGTON'S AGENTS SHOULD BE ROUNDING UP EVERY DARK LEGIONNAIRE IN SIGHT--



PLEASE PROCEED FROM THE PARK IN AN ORDERLY FASHION! THANK YOU!

--AND YET, THEY'RE ALLOWED TO WALK AROUND AS IF NOTHING EVER HAPPENED BEFORE!

I MEAN--

--WHO CARES THAT THEY TRIED TO INVAD ECHIDNAOPOLIS, RIGHT?*

*AS CHRONICLED IN KNUCKLES #7 THROUGH 9, THE DARK VENGEANCE STORYLINE-- JUSTIN.



LIVE AND LET LIVE, I ALWAYS SAY, KNUCKLES!

I'D RATHER LIVE AND LET DIE, MIGHTY!

I OWE THOSE GUYS BIG TIME!

SO WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE THEY'RE UP TO?



AS IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR PALS HAVE GOING DOWN, DARK BABE!

"FORMER" YOU MEAN, DON'T YOU, VECTOR?

CHILL OUT, VECTOR--

"-- JULIE-SU DOESN'T KNOW ANY MORE THAN WE DO, BUT I'M BETTING I KNOW SOMEONE ELSE WHO DOES..."

INFIGHTING AMONGST THE ECHIDNAS!

NOW THAT IS AN INTERESTING DEVELOPMENT!

THE LARGER QUESTION NOW BEING---



-- HOW CAN I EXPLOIT THE SITUATION TO OUR ADVANTAGE?

BETTER TO RISK EVERYTHING THAN CONTINUE LIVING IN THIS FILTH AND SQUALOR!

GERBIL!

GATHER EVERYONE AROUND!

RIGHT AWAY, GENERAL, SIR!

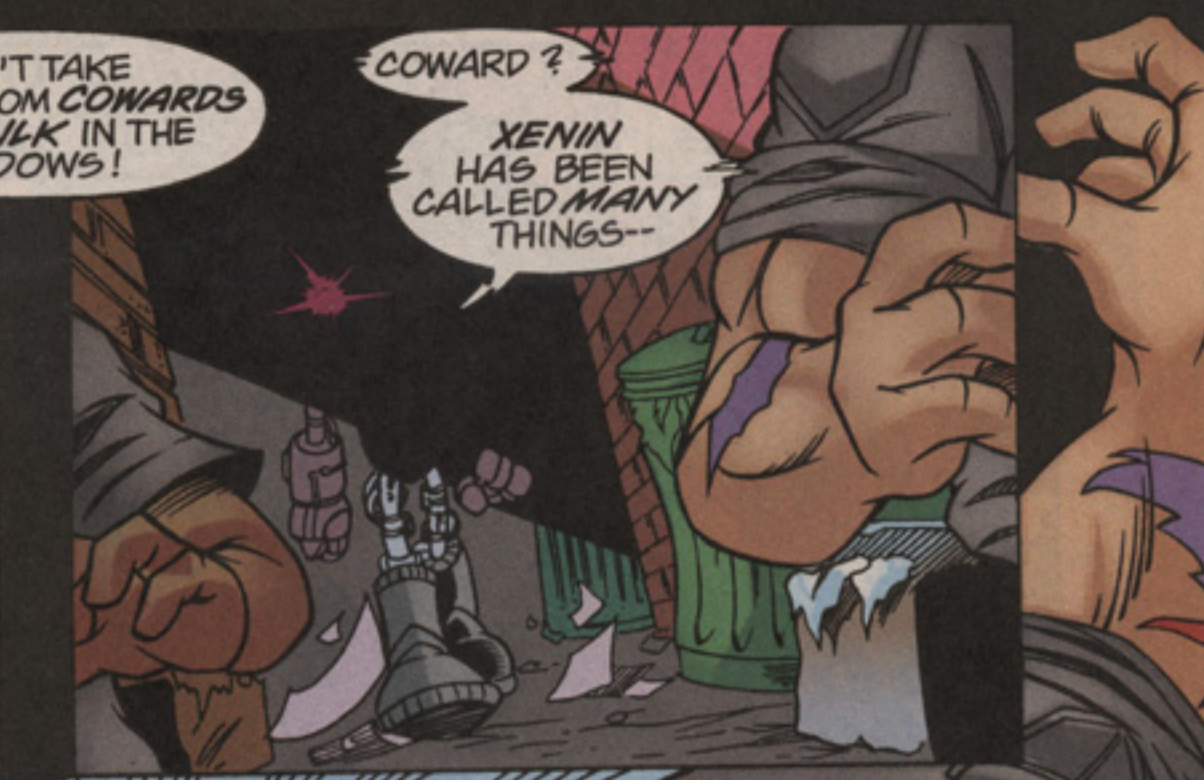
STAY WHERE YOU ARE!

uhh--z!



REALLY?

I DON'T TAKE ORDERS FROM COWARDS WHO SKULK IN THE SHADOWS!



COWARD?

XENIN HAS BEEN CALLED MANY THINGS--



--EFFICIENT--

--LOYAL--

--EVEN RUTHLESS--

--BUT NEVER A COWARD!

MAH

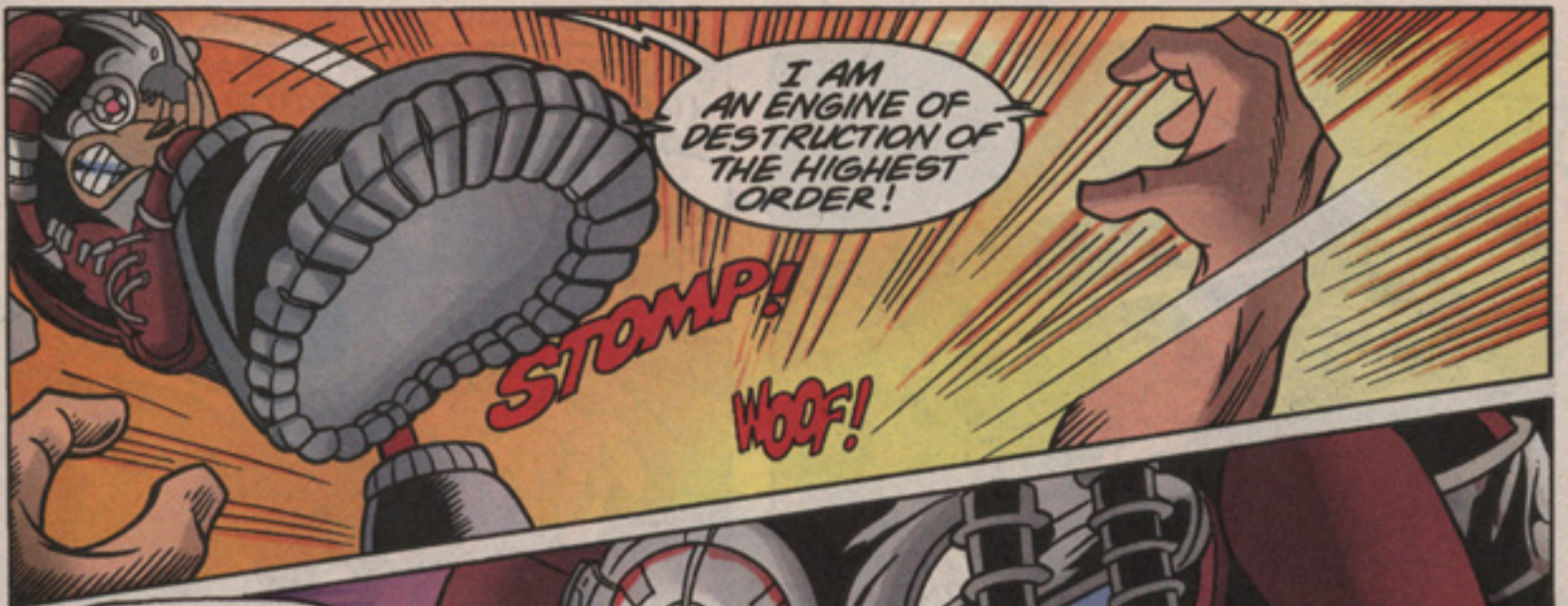
YOU'LL PAY FOR THAT EFFRONTERY, ECHIDNA!



ECHIDNA??!

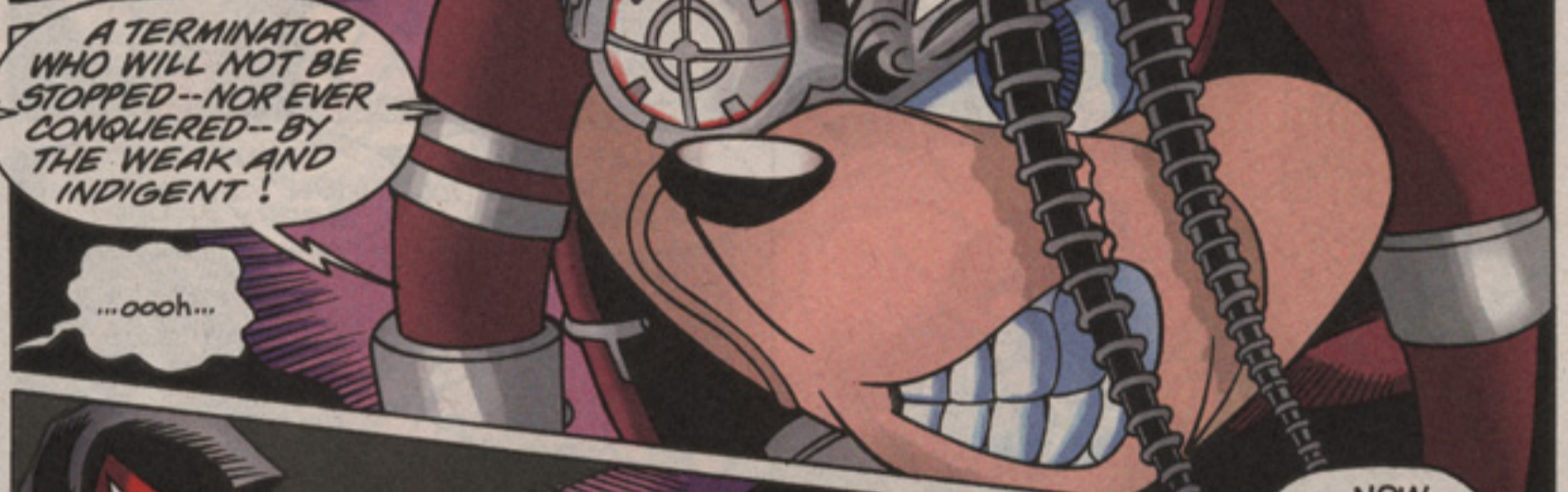
ECHIDNA??!

I AM MUCH MORE THAN JUST AN ECHIDNA!!!



I AM AN ENGINE OF DESTRUCTION OF THE HIGHEST ORDER!

STOMP!
WOOF!



A TERMINATOR WHO WILL NOT BE STOPPED--NOR EVER CONQUERED--BY THE WEAK AND INDIGENT!

...oooh...



NOW TAKE THIS WORTHLESS PIECE OF GARBAGE TO THE COMMAND CENTER!

AS FOR THE REST OF THIS VERMIN--



"-- LOCK THEM UP IN THE SEWERS WHERE THEY BELONG!"

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, KNUX, THINGS HAVE GOTTEN REALLY NASTY AROUND HERE!

TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW, MIGHTY!



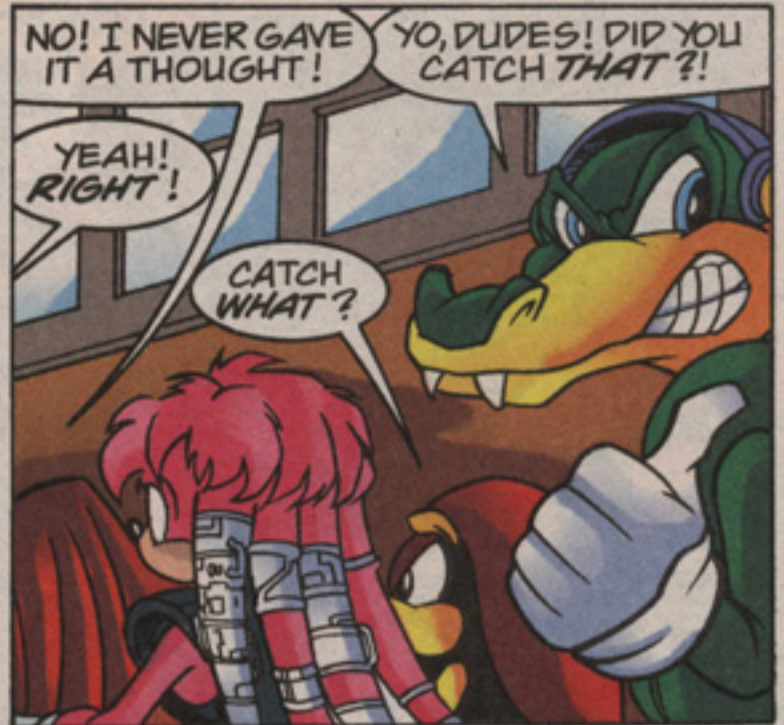
DO YOU EVER WISH IT WAS THE WAY IT USED TO BE, KNUCKLES?

WHEN THERE WAS NO DARK LEGION OR ECHIDNAOPOLIS OR ANY OTHER COMPLICATION?



YOU MEAN *BEFORE* I LEARNED MY MOM WAS ALIVE AND ECHIDNAOPOLIS STILL EXISTED?

YEAH!



NO! I NEVER GAVE IT A THOUGHT!

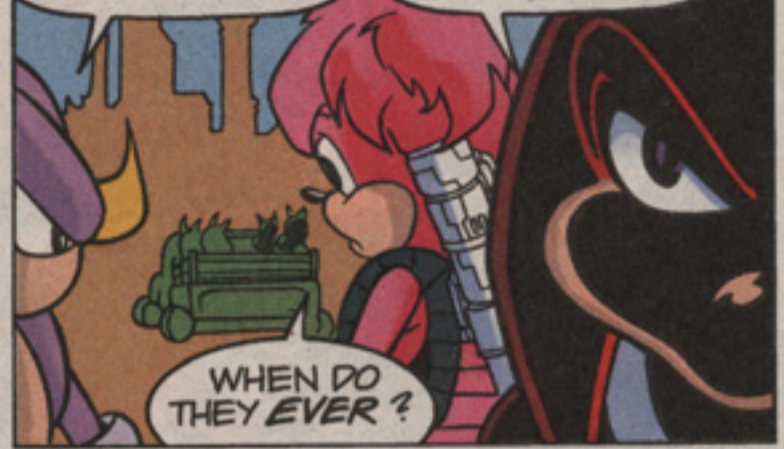
YO, DUDES! DID YOU CATCH THAT?!

YEAH! RIGHT!

CATCH WHAT?

THAT LOOKED LIKE A TRUCK FULL OF DINGOES!

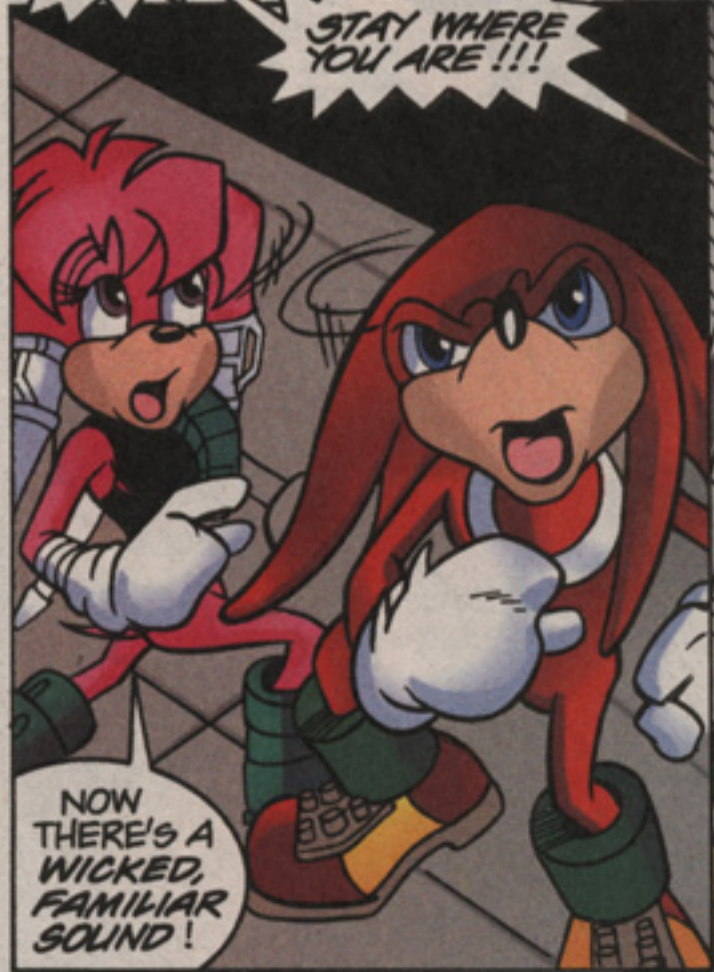
AND THEY DIDN'T LOOK TOO HAPPY, EITHER!



WHEN DO THEY EVER?

HALT!

STAY WHERE YOU ARE!!!



NOW THERE'S A WICKED, FAMILIAR SOUND!

IT SHOULD BE!

I'VE BEEN ORDERED TO BRING YOU BACK, JULIE-SU!

DEAD OR ALIVE, MAKES NO DIFFERENCE TO ME, BUT GREAT DIMITRI HAS DECREED YOUR PLACE IS AMONG US ONCE AGAIN!

SUPPOSE I SAY, "THANKS BUT NO THANKS!"



SUPPOSE I MISS AND ACCIDENTALLY
KILL YOU IF YOU REFUSE!

ZZZZAT!

THAT WASN'T
TOO FRIENDLY,
PAL!

TIME FOR YOU TO
CRAWL BACK UNDER
YOUR ROCK!

NOT EVEN A
DENT!

I WAS
REBUILT TO
BE YOUR
SUPERIOR
IN EVERY
WAY!

AND
NOW--

--IT'S MY
TURN--

--"PAL!!"

WOOF!

“NOW, BEFORE SOMEONE ELSE MAKES LIKE A HERO OR GETS OTHER SELF-DELLUSIONAL IDEAS--DON'T!”

HOW?
HOW WERE YOU ABLE TO PENETRATE HAVEN?

ISN'T IT OBVIOUS, THUNDERHAWK?

ONLY ONE BEING OTHER THAN ONE OF OUR OWN COULD HAVE DONE SO!

ON THE OTHER HAND, TREACHERY SEEMS TO BE A VIRTUE AMONG THEIR KIND!

IT TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE!

I DARE SAY WE'RE NO MORE OR LESS TREACHEROUS THAN ANY OF YOU!

ISN'T THAT RIGHT--

--MORITORI REX?

EXCUSE US IF THE FEELING ISN'T MUTUAL!

THAT'S QUITE ALRIGHT, AS YOU'LL SOON LEARN THE ERROR OF YOUR WAYS!

MY FORMER COMRADES!

HOW GOOD IT IS TO SEE YOU ONCE AGAIN!

OPEN A CHANNEL TO MAIN BASE, TROOPER!

AYE, SIR!

YES?

EXCEPT FOR A COUPLE OF LOOSE ENDS, EVERYTHING ELSE IS SECURED!

LOOSE ENDS?

WE'VE TAKEN HAVEN, GRANDFATHER!

THERE'S NO SIGN OF LOCKE OR SPECTRE WITHIN THE COMPLEX!

THAT IS A PROBLEM!

YES, IT IS, GREAT ONE, EVEN THOUGH WE HAVE HIS SON, LOCKE CAN BE LITTERLY RUTHLESS!

AS FOR SPECTRE, HE'S A WILD CARD! THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT HE'LL DO!

FOR THE TIME BEING, MORITORI, SIMPLY PROCEED ACCORDING TO PLAN! DIMITRI OUT!

THEY AREN'T THE ONLY ONES YOU HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT!

YOU THINK THE PEOPLE ARE GOING TO BUY YOUR BOY BENEDICT?

NOT ONCE I BLOW THE WHISTLE ON HIM THEY WON'T!

ASTONISHING!

AFTER ALL THIS TIME

--AND ALL YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH--*

--YOU STILL HAVE THE UNMITIGATED NERVE TO CHALLENGE MY DOMINION!

IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D SWEAR YOU WERE MORE MY DESCENDENT THAN MY BROTHER'S!

DON'T FLATTER YOURSELF, BUD!

IF THIS IS THE WORST YOU CAN DO--

--WAKE ME WHEN IT'S OVER!

OVER?

MY DEAR KNUCKLES--
--THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING!

I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO SOME SERIOUS SCREAMING!

*CHECK OUT THE FIRST KNUCKLES MINI-SERIES AS WELL AS KNUCKLES #7 THROUGH 9 FOR EVENTS DIMITRI IS REFERRING TO--HISTORIAN JUSTIN.

VALENTINO and HAR'0

**PRO ART BY
NELSON ORTEGA &
HARVEY MERCADOOCASIO.
COLOR AND ENJOY!**

